

Kelsey School Division - A History

The 1960s

Setting the Direction for the Future

The ten years following the May 1959 establishment of the Kelsey School Division, formed by amalgamating The Pas, Carrot Valley and Wanless School Districts, was a period that would set geographic and philosophical parameters of the school system that would extend into the next century. It was a period of dynamic growth in educational understanding, service to a growing diversity of student needs, and the development of school facilities that continue to have an impact to this day. The many decisions made by the school trustees in the 1960s, influenced by school administrators and teachers, helped drive the educational system from one born in the 19th century to one that could confidently meet the challenges of the 21st century ahead of it.

During that decade as well, the manner in which the school board operated would undergo drastic changes. The school board minutes of this period reflect the nature of the changes, and mirror the perspectives of the public toward education at that time. Prior to the amalgamation, the education of students in Manitoba was geared to provide basic literacy and numeracy, and then stream out less capable students into the work force so that by the end of Grade 8 a minority of the students who started out in Grade One remained to enter high school. The post World War Two baby boom started to place a strain on the older school facilities, but an early answer to this was to attempt to reduce the student population so that it “fit” the system of the day.

Early on the new school division would face challenges of the new dynamic for provincial education. Used to making the most trivial of decisions in the operation of The Pas schools (whether to buy textbooks; should a soccer ball for a school be purchased?) to issues about students (what is proper dress for high school students?) and individual employees (is time off for an employee to give birth considered sick leave?), school board meetings began to address the major issues of special needs students, cultural integration, improved administration, student transportation, crowded classrooms, the teacher “union”, educational curricula and instructional philosophy.

Special Education

Inspector Gillies stated to the June 16, 1959 school board meeting that “it would be wise to go through the whole school and find out how many retarded children we have in the District and it might be wise to set up another special room even though I.Q. was not to be the standard in which the Government paid special grants.” The use of special class rooms to house less capable students (measured by simplistic and often subjective standards), “taught” by unqualified non-teacher personnel on permit was the norm for these days. In November of 1961 the board chair reported that there were “26 retarded children with IQs under 80” and recommended opening an “ungraded” class in The Pas Elementary School

(i.e. Red Brick) to supplement the “retarded” school. The principal was authorized to visit a school in Brandon to learn about the teaching and organization of such classes.

Such was the disconnect with the need to educate all students in society that in February 1962 the board decided “that parents of retarded children in The Pas schools be informed that effective the Fall Term 1962, the Kelsey School Division will no longer be responsible for the education of their children.” In December 1963, principals met with the provincial psychologist and a social worker and agreed to rate (by I.Q.) students so as to streamline classes. The issue of ungraded classes would continue to be a school board concern for years to come, and in August 1965 it was announced that the Department of Education would be visiting the school division to assess the need for the number of ungraded classes.

By March 1966 the school board remained concerned about the delay in testing students by psychologists from the Department of Education for entry to non-graded classrooms. At the Annual General Meeting of the Manitoba Teachers’ Society (MTS) in March, Kelsey Division Association Vice President Vaughn Wadelius lamented the delay of many months between a student’s psychological assessment and the receipt of results, and proposed a resolution, that was passed, requesting that the service to northern students be improved.

By the arrival, in September 1966, of the Division’s first Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Allan Watson, there were now eight ungraded classrooms with 151 children. In December 1966 Superintendent Watson informed the board that ungraded teachers in Winnipeg received an extra salary increment. Changes in provincial education began to play a role in how the students were accommodated. In May 1967 the school board discussed salary grants for “teachers of retarded children.” By July 1967 it became mandatory in Manitoba to accept mentally challenged students into the public school system, and thus required trained teachers to be hired, though getting teachers to come to a northern school division was always a challenge.

By October 1967 the use of terminology for slower learners and ungraded classes was a topic of discussion. The principals suggested the use of “modified” to describe the classes, but the school board preferred the use of “special.” The school trustees also agreed to request a resident psychologist for the north to be located in The Pas. In April 1968 the school board gave its support to another MTS resolution asking the Government to set up a “mental clinic” in The Pas to serve the north.

The issue of special education was well on the way to being dealt with more sensitively by 1969 as a result of curricular, staffing, support and administrative changes that would take place in the early 1970s.

B. Growth and Integration

One of the early results of the post-war baby boom in The Pas and area was a need for

additional school classroom space, and a need to replace two pre-war classroom annexes located on either side of the "Red Brick School." These annexes had no running water and were heated by wood stoves. In 1958 two new single story schools had been built in The Pas - Kelsey and Opasquia Elementary Schools. These did little to accommodate the growing student population and served mainly to replace the annexes.

By the fall of 1959 a new growth pressure began to be discussed at school board meetings. An Indian Affairs official, Mr. Slobodzian, spoke to the school board about the trend in Manitoba to integrate aboriginal students into the public school system. At that time there were day schools on The Pas Reserve and in Big Eddy. Early on the school board supported integration at the high school (then housing Grade Seven to Grade Twelve). The crux of the discussion centred on the financing of such a process since the education of aboriginal students on reservations was funded by the federal government while public school students were a provincial government and school division responsibility.

On November 17, 1959 Slobodzian suggested two possible fee options that could provide the KSD board with the funds needed to build additional classrooms and hire additional teachers. One option was to have Indian Affairs pay a straight fee on the capital cost on the school system on the basis of pupil enrolment. The other option was for Indian Affairs to purchase "...the cost of one or two classrooms...and pay fees on the cost of the school operation", less all capital costs and grants paid by the Manitoba Department of Education. While either option was not yet approved by Indian Affairs, the KSD board was enthusiastic enough to ask architects to do preliminary sketches for a five room addition to The Pas Collegiate for vocational training, and for a six classroom and small auditorium addition to Kelsey School. Meanwhile a preliminary agreement with Indian Affairs would be sought, "to allow thirty Indian pupils at the high school...tuition fees based on the per pupil cost less capital costs and provincial grants."

For the next few years the topic of fees for aboriginal students would be raised at school board meetings time and time again with little progress. Questions of bus transportation, possible use of the Indian Day School, and the nature of the student fees arose. By July 1960 the school board was prepared to "admit Indian children to the public school system from grades 7-12" and "that fees be charged at the rate set out in the Public Schools Act for children whose parents reside on Crown land..." The KSD board called for tenders for the Kelsey School addition amid continued concerns about overcrowding. By April 1961 fees had been paid for twenty Indian students attending the public schools in grades 1, 4, 7, 8, and 9.

In December 1961, Dick Bell and Roy Carter of Indian Affairs spoke to the school board again about the integration proposal and suggested that a building scheme be presented to Indian Affairs. The school board assured them "they were whole heartedly behind the move for total integration" of the two school systems. But by June 4, 1962 an emergent meeting of the school board was called to discuss the "problems with the building program and proposed integration." Issues had arisen about persons leasing and living on Crown

land and the collection of their non-resident school fees, and even prompted some discussion about revisions to the school division boundaries.

In December 1962 the school board made the decision to construct an 18 classroom two story elementary school at the Kelsey School site, and a library and gymnasium addition to The Pas Collegiate with the former Collegiate gymnasium converted to Home Economics and Industrial Arts use.

In January 1963 the school board discussed the progress on integration, noting that while there had been only partial integration for three years now, no great problem had emerged and that the results were worth the effort. In June 1963 the tenders were opened for the two new schools but in July the board minutes noted that due to over-crowding no non-resident students would be allowed. The next month saw a visit from Minister of Education Stewart McLean who met with the board to discuss school fees and boundaries, persons leasing Indian land but using public schools, students in KSD schools but whose parents lived elsewhere, non-resident fees, and proposed school division boundary changes. In September the board sent bills out and a deadline for payment as a result of fees not received from some non-resident students.

By January 1964 the architect had reviewed the plans for the new Kelsey (8 classrooms) and Opasquia (16 classrooms) Schools, and had incorporated space in them for lunchrooms. In February when students were to move into the new Opasquia School it was noted that the Department of Education still had been unable to get a tuition agreement with Indian Affairs. Finally in March it could be reported that a tuition agreement had been reached, and in April funds for 2/3 of the building program costs were received from Indian Affairs.

There was still the question of non-resident fees to be addressed. Feelings were beginning to run high. The school board felt that the Department of Education had taken enough time to arrive at a fee for students outside the school division boundaries. At a July 20, 1964 board meeting the trustees moved that the "Department be advised that as of the start of the Fall Term 1964 no students from Big Eddy Settlement, Young's Point, or non-Indian students residing on Crown land will be permitted to receive tuition [register?] in our schools unless a satisfactory conclusion is reached with the Board of Trustees and the Manitoba Government."

It was about this time that consideration was given to the naming of a proposed new high school after Miss Margaret Barbour, a high school teacher who had been with the school district and the school division since 1923.

In September 1965 the issue of non-resident fees for Indian students arose again. The school board was advised by Deputy Minister Scott Bateman to appeal to the Manitoba cabinet. It worked! In November Bateman " reported that Cabinet had met and amended the [Public Schools] Act by Order in Council regarding fees for Indian students. At this school board meeting the board also was asked to change the name of the red brick

school from “The Pas Elementary” to “The Mary Duncan School.” The board responded by asking for more information on who she was [the first principal of that school’s elementary section, who taught in The Pas from 1914 to 1938].

At the February 7, 1966 school board meeting Gordon McGillvary, Charlie Lathlin, Joe Jebb and former Chief Bignell attended to express concern about students attending the local pool room at noon and arriving late to class as a result. Mr. Bignell also wanted to “convey his feelings of the people on the Reserve that the integration program seems to be running smoothly and very satisfactory” and that he had noted this in his meetings in Winnipeg and Ottawa.

Progress on a new high school was proceeding rapidly with the purchase of the land (for \$3,500) in February and approval in March of an agreement with Industry & Commerce, Municipal Affairs, Education, Mines & Natural Resources, Town of The Pas, the Local Government District of Consol, and Churchill Forest Industries. Four architects were approached to submit plans. By August 1966 the Minister of Education had approved a 48 classroom count Collegiate, and Étienne Gaboury was selected as the architect. In October Poole Construction was awarded the contract to construct it.

The school board was also promoting the addition of a member of The Pas Band as a school trustee, but was running into some questions of the legality of this. The trustees also heard Board Chair Jack Kennedy argue to either rename Kelsey School or rename Kelsey School Division as he felt the common name caused confusion. A Notice of Motion went forward to rename the school division to “The Pas School Division” but the name change never came about, no doubt because it was found that the KSD name was part of the Public Schools Act so that change required provincial legislation. In May 1967 the board minutes stated again that the trustees wanted to meet with the “Boundaries Commission to discuss revenue from the leased Indian Band land and L.G.D. of Consol.” In August 1967 approval was given for the name Margaret Barbour Collegiate to be assigned to the new high school. The former TPCI building would become a Grade 7-9 school named Mary Duncan Junior High.

The new high school had limited industrial arts classroom space. The November school board meeting noted Board Chair Jack Kennedy was “very disappointed with the Boundary Commission’s recommendation that our high school may be able to use the facilities of the new technical vocational school rather than have a wing included to the high school.” Subsequently the Deputy Minister directed in a letter that the new Northern Manitoba Technical Vocational Centre would provide such facilities and instructors to the Kelsey School Division. While over the years this has been done more or less successfully, Kennedy’s concern was a prophetic one. In addition to coordinating timetables and curricula between the two sites, in later years the influx of post-secondary students to the college had a negative impact on the availability of some industrial arts courses to KSD high school students.

In the Fall of 1967, the school division was in dialogue with the Department of Education

about the feasibility of school space being used for kindergartens - then and now an optional program. By 1969 the growth of the KSD student population due to the influx of workers at Churchill Forest Industries resulted in approval being received for further additions to be built at the new MBCI, and at Kelsey and Opasquia Schools where they would link the two original buildings at each site. It was also felt that a new junior high school might be needed in the near future. Architect Gaboury had inspected the old Mary Duncan (Red Brick) School and reported it was too costly to upgrade. The 50 year old wooden parochial Sacred Heart School was also suffering signs of deterioration. Its Roman Catholic school board had initiated discussions on ways to transfer their students to the public system a few years earlier. As the second decade of the school division, approached, it was evident that the 1970s would be a significant growth period in every aspect.

Religion and Accommodation

For many years before the establishment of the Kelsey School Division in 1959, there were religious elements that were part of the daily school routine in public schools. Regulations of the Manitoba Department of Education mandated that the day opened with religious observances that consisted of a bible reading and the saying of the Lord's Prayer. Since the resolution of the "Manitoba Schools Question" in 1897, the children of Roman Catholic parents were granted the right to the instruction of their religion in the public school system. In The Pas, however, as the result of a disagreement between the local parish and principal Mary Duncan that had occurred in 1914, a separate school run by the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish was built to offer parochial Catholic education to hundreds of Grade 1-8 students. In 1918 the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary, an order based in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, arrived to provide teachers for Sacred Heart School.

Another practise of the day in public schools was the handing out of the King James version of the bible by the Gideon Society to every Grade 5 student. In November 1961 the school board minutes recorded that some bibles were being returned by parents. Some years later the school board made some changes to the practise and allowed students the right to refusal to accept a bible.

Roman Catholic students under the Public Schools Act were allowed to be away from school on certain religious holidays, without a penalty. Opasquia Principal Garnet Stevens complained to the school board in December 1960 that on some of these religious days a few Catholic students were using an outdoor rink built in the Opasquia School playground by the Lions Club. The school board subsequently asked the Lions Club to approach the Sacred Heart School to advise their students to stay away.

The Manitoba Public Schools Act had a provision that Roman Catholic parents could request that religious instruction be provided to Catholic children in the public school. The possibility that Roman Catholic parents might begin to exercise their right to have daily religious education taught to their children during the last period of the public school day raised some concerns among non-Catholics. In December 1962 the Catholic parents made

such a request in a petition as required by the law. In January 1963 a brief from The Pastoral Association responded to the issue of religious instruction in the schools, noting that their group favoured interdenominational instruction, stating that if one faith would be given permission, there was a strong possibility others would request the same. A committee of the school board had been struck to examine the issue of a request for religious instruction as asked for in a petition by the OLSH parish, but “could not make any recommendations to the board.” However, the KSD Board respected the PSA provision and at its January 1963 meeting did pass a motion approving “that religious instruction be given Catholic students attending the Public School.”

Things came to a head at the February 4, 1963 school board meeting when many Protestant citizens attended to “register our protest against the decision of the school board to grant the use of the Public Schools and school time to the Roman Catholic Church,” and presented a petition with 320 signatures asking the school board to reconsider. The delegation stated it was opposed to “lost” instructional time, and disagreed with the interpretation of the Public Schools Act that allowed this practise.

On January 18, 1964 the Catholic parish formed a school board to operate the Sacred Heart School. Later that year the Manitoba government initiated discussions on a “shared services” concept whereby private and parochial schools might access some services (ex. textbooks, transportation, use of gymnasias and science labs).

Things seemed to get bogged down but the topic was raised again in February 1964 when the board stated that the Catholic parents’ permission in writing would be required for the development of a list of students who would receive religious instruction. A compromise agreement to use only one day a week per school for religious instruction of Catholic students was “going along fine” by March. In May, however, the local parish priest Fr. Biledeau asked the school board to arrange a separate instruction room at Kelsey School, as using the public assembly area (a hallway) for instruction was difficult. It was decided to discuss this in June with the Kelsey School principal. Within a few years a solution was devised whereby Catholic teachers located in the school volunteered to teach the religion classes in their own classrooms. Those of their students not participating were relocated to other classrooms during the religious instruction lessons.

At the September 14, 1964 school board meeting Fr. Biledeau was back to request that the board motion requiring each parent to submit a permission slip for their child to receive religious instruction be rescinded in favour of a list of student names being submitted by the parish with parental approval. It seems the board agreed to that change in procedure.

In November 1964 a SHS board delegation, led by Jack Kennedy, presented a brief to the Committee of the Legislature re Shared Services, and had begun dialogue with the Kelsey School Division board in May, 1964 on possible cooperation. Overcrowding at Sacred Heart School continued, and the costs of providing educational services continued to rise. On April 15, 1965 a delegation from Sacred Heart School appeared to announce that the school needed to transfer two classes (Grades 3 and 4) to the public school system, about 75 students. This issue was revisited again on May 31 when SHS board chair Ed Sarna

proposed the transfer of 75 high school students from SHS to the public system instead of the Grade 3 and 4 classes. This was as a result of the recall of the teaching nuns of SHS to Saskatchewan. The school board was asked to consider “incorporating the Sacred Heart School into the Public School System so that they [the KSD] would qualify for provincial grants. The SHS would retain their daily Religious Instruction and the Parish would finance the school over and above the grants.”

The school board saw the advantages of having more students qualify for provincial grants and agreed to consider the proposal. It sought information from the Norwood School Division in Winnipeg which had a similar arrangement. In June a committee of two persons was appointed “to meet the SHS board to investigate the details re incorporating SHS into the Public School System.” At its October 1965 meeting that year it was agreed to share costs with the SHS board to bring in Mr Bill Narins of Norwood School Division to meet with the group once SHS had put their exact proposal in writing. Meanwhile some shared services initiatives promoted by the province were authorized with SHS Grade 7 and 8 students. This allowed the students to take Industrial Arts classes in the public system beginning January 1, 1966.

By May 1966, the SHS school board announced to its parishioners that the financial situation for its school was grave, particularly in its ability to pay teacher salaries. In the Fall of 1966 a joint announcement by the parochial and public school boards explained that the operation of Sacred Heart School would be taken over by the Kelsey School Division on November 1. What came about was an interesting compromise arrangement which ran from 1966 to 1973. The KSD board agreed to rent the SHS building for a dollar a year, and hire and pay the teachers’ salaries. The school would be run separately as it had been earlier, but with the principal appointed by the public school board. In November 1966 Sr Andre was appointed as principal of the Sacred Heart School, now part of the Kelsey School Division. This integration arrangement ran well, for in December 1969 the school board decided “That the students in Sacred Heart School be accommodated in the addition to Kelsey Elementary School when that addition is ready. The arrangement is necessitated because of the deteriorated condition of the Sacred Heart School present building. These pupils, as much as possible, be treated as a complete unit.”

In June 1969, after 51 years of teaching service, the Sisters of the Presentation withdrew from The Pas. In 1972-73 the students at SHS along with 8 other classes in Mary Duncan Elementary (red brick) School were combined under one KSD principal. In September 1973, both student groups were incorporated into the new Mary Duncan Elementary, completing the integration of the two school systems, but changes in the school division’s growth and dynamics were to prevent the unique details mentioned in the 1969 board motion from coming into being.

The Growth of Curriculum and Instruction

When the Kelsey School Division was formed in May 1959 the elementary schools had no kindergartens, and the Grade 9-12 high school curriculum was limited to a “university

entrance” type that had been in existence in Manitoba for many years. High school students graduated from Grade 11 at the end of the standard high school program, and went on to complete Grade 12 and graduate again. Grade 12 was the equivalent of 1st year university so that graduates went into 2nd year upon university admittance. The curriculum of these last two high school years, at least in The Pas, was very limited - students in Grade 12 took English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, and could chose from either French or Latin as options. Final exams in June were set by the province. There were no “shops” classes and physical education was limited to Grade 9 students. Thus one could argue that a latent objective of a high school was to stream out “less capable” students from a post-secondary education.

On April 27, 1960 the school board heard a proposal from the collegiate principal Stanley Toms that a commercial course be considered for the high school. And on February 6, 1961 Inspector Gillies demonstrated the use of cuisenaire rods (a primary grade manipulative for teaching arithmetic being promoted by the Manitoba Teachers Society) to the school board. He recommended these materials be used in all Grade 1 classes starting in the fall.

On April 3, school board discussion took place on the need to hire a music supervisor for all the schools. And on April 21, 1961 the Indian Affairs official Mr. Slobodzian stated that the school board should consider adding shops and home economics courses in the junior high grades. By April 2, 1962 consideration was made to add the use of cuisenaire rods to all the Grade 2 classes in the fall. An agreement to add home economics and industrial arts facilities at The Pas Collegiate facilitated the availability of these courses. By April 1, 1963 the board received a request from Opasquia principal Garnet Stevens to continue the use of cuisenaire rods into Grade 3.

Efforts by the high school to offer some courses in the evenings were less well received, with only a typing course having students sign up. By December 1963, however, TPCI principal Bryant Hasker attended a school board meeting to advocate for the introduction of further industrial arts courses in electrical, drafting, woodwork, metals, and plastics. It was noted that approval from the Department of Education was required for this to proceed. Further, Principal Hasker stated that a high school “General Course” was needed to accommodate those students not aiming for a post-secondary university program. It was decided to delay the implementation of such a high school program until the following year in order to be better able to plan for its introduction.

By January 1964 the board was also considering the broader introduction of “physical training” for use in the new auditorium. In January 1965 a high school handbook was approved for distribution. In February 1965, the board was still considering the introduction of a high school General Course. In September the Board adopted a high school laggard policy, and by December was gathering information on the possible introduction of sex education at the high school.

There was an immediate impact on elementary curricula when the school division’s first

Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Allan Watson, was hired on April 4 to start in August 1, 1966. He had some background with teaching methods used in England. The school board decided to leave issues of “streaming” students to the new Superintendent. In May that year they also hired new principals for the high school and the elementary schools, and stated that one of the board’s objectives would be to have principals with degrees as soon as possible.

By November 1966 Superintendent Watson was able to report that at the elementary level some considerable progress had been made with teaching students in groups in keeping with a continuous progress philosophy. He supported the use of IQ tests at Grades 4, 6, and 9, but not in Grade 2. And in January 1967 the school board approved the introduction of the new provincial “Occupational Entrance” program in Grades 7, 8, and 9. While Allan Watson remained for only 1966-67, his view of elementary instruction and teaching methods made an impact for years to come.

Members of the community began to advocate at a school board meeting on May 15, 1967 that kindergarten should be introduced into the public school system. By the fall the board entered into discussion with the Department of Education on the feasibility of space being made available to cover the installation of a kindergarten program. The board also agreed to introduce Basic French instruction in Grade 6 classes for the fall. In August principals were informed that the “Board wanted to continue with the unit system of grouping...all schools were to run the same.” The board also supported the use of continuous progress in the system by sending principals to visit an elementary school in Thompson to view the methods used there.

Progress and Change

Progressive change requires motivated leadership to be implemented and effective. The 1960s saw a sea change in the direction of the new school division, much of it the result of changes in and additions to those in its leadership positions. The decade opened with the leadership provided by a single Secretary-Treasurer and a school board that had now added representation from Wanless and the Carrot Valley, the new regions within the amalgamated Kelsey School Division #45. Charles M. Morrish was the first board chair (1959, 1960) and had been a trustee in the former The Pas School District. He was replaced as chair by Rev. Thompson in 1961, and in 1962-64 by former Vice-Chair Jack Berg, who would remain on the board for seven years. Thomas Stevens served as trustee for nine years (1961-69), and was the Chair in 1965. Cal Gibson was elected trustee in 1961 and he would remain on the board for nine years as well, providing significant business acumen. He was joined in 1962 by Jack Kennedy, who would serve on the board for eight years, four of these as chair (1966-1969) during the school division’s periods of most significant growth.

Traditionally the Secretary-Treasurer and the school board made many decisions that one might find unusual today. The Secretary-Treasurer hired teachers and made most of the business and finance operational decisions. The school board was involved as well in decisions that would seem petty by current standards - whether to supply a school with a soccer ball or a television set, whether to fix a heating unit in a classroom, and whether a

teacher could attend an in-service session or, on occasion, whether someone should be fired. It took some courage for a principal to address the board on educational issues. Principal Marian Pinuta at the October 1 1962 board meeting did just that quite forcefully when she “complained the Board apparently lacked interest in progress of the schools” as there was “no music teacher; not enough physical education equipment, no increase in library book expenditures, and no French in Grade 4 (like Sacred Heart School was doing).”

The school board in January 1964 tried to curtail phone calls to the schools. A motion was passed directing “parents will be advised by a stencilled notice delivered by the school children, that in future no phone calls will be accepted by the Principals. If any urgent message is necessary it must be directed through the Secretary’s [Secretary-Treasurer] office.” The Manitoba Telephone System would be contacted to change the school telephone numbers to unlisted except for the Secretary-Treasurer’s. The board also received word of a collective agreement arbitration ruling - that the Kelsey Teachers Association had been awarded \$75 payment for any university course a teacher passed while in service. In March 1964 the board agreed to increase this incentive to up to two courses per year.

In April, 1965 the school board was unhappy about the manner in which “the teacher’s teaching habits were addressed,” and expressed concern that reports by principals on teachers were too late and not specific enough” to be effective. While the Board had the authority to appoint principals to its schools, its unease in selecting principals caused the trustees to request in February, 1964 that provincial school inspector Ron McCurdy assist them in doing so. McCurdy also suggested the board that it should have a policy on suspensions.

The first Secretary-Treasurer of the school division was W. M. “Mac” Munroe, who had continued on in this role from The Pas School District years prior to the amalgamation. As the operation of the school division became more complex, the school board decided to facilitate the construction of the two-story additions to Kelsey and Opasquia Schools by hiring Ken Perry in August 1963 to assist the Secretary-Treasurer in supervising new school construction. The Board also began to allow some principals to make some of the decisions that affected their schools. Things came to a head at the September 8, 1964 school board meeting when Secretary-Treasurer Munroe complained that “school division individuals were proceeding on issues without going through his office.”

At the following September 14 school board meeting Munroe “threatened to resign if the board didn’t fix his job profile.” The board’s response was to write him a letter suggesting that they would terminate his employment. At the September 21 board meeting, Munroe was absent. The minutes noted that when he had been asked if he had reached a decision as a result of the school board’s letter to him, he is reported to have replied that the decision seemed to have already been taken without discussion with him. Subsequently the board informed him to have the books ready for the auditors before leaving. At the October 5, 1964 meeting the board appointed Ken Perry as Secretary-Treasurer (and part-

time Truant Officer), a position he would hold until his retirement in 1988.

The Age of the Superintendent

By 1965 in some southern Manitoba school divisions, school boards were hiring educators to fill the role of Superintendent to take leadership responsibilities in the education decision-making areas. At first the Kelsey school board had relied on the role of the Secretary-Treasurer and trustees, and with limited input from individual school principals. During the first few years of the 1960s, individual principals were invited to attend a portion of the school board meeting on a rotational basis, to present a report on the needs of their schools or the health of their students (scabies, lice issues). But the principals in place at this time, except for the high school principal, did not hold a university degree. In Manitoba elementary school teaching certificates were granted after a ten-month post-high school diploma training program at the Manitoba Teachers' College or in Brandon's Normal School. Educational philosophy and practise were undergoing a major awakening across North America, and by 1964 teacher training was moved under the control of Manitoba universities.

The school board made the decision to hire a Superintendent of Schools and in April, 1966 was prepared to offer Mr. Allan Watson this position. Mr. Watson had a B. A. and a B. Ed. and was hired starting August 1, 1966 for an annual salary of \$12,000 per year. The board seemed relieved to be able to transfer to him responsibility for dealing with educational issues such as the implementation of the Occupational Education and General high school programs, special education, graduation exercises (then planned for the Thanksgiving weekend) and the supervision of principals and teachers. With the construction of additional schools under consideration, staffing of schools would also become a more active responsibility of the new Superintendent.

In September, 1966 Superintendent Watson's influence was beginning to become evident. He took exception to the use of the term "ungraded" (there were now 151 such students in eight classrooms), and recommended that such classes not be used until Grade 4. He recommended the hiring of a full-time "steno" to be shared by the Superintendent's office and Opasquia School, another steno shared between Kelsey and Mary Duncan Schools, and a third shared between the Secretary-Treasurer and The Pas Collegiate Institute. He had a decidedly supportive opinion about the need to operate schools with service to students in mind. He advised principals that they could admit students into their schools before the designated school opening time of 8:45 a.m. if it were raining out. He clarified that school custodians were answerable to the school administrators, and that he would assume some of the teacher "rating".

One of the most innovation aspects of Superintendent Watson's philosophy arose through his support (likely based on his teaching experience in England) of a more flexible approach to curriculum delivery at the elementary level. Manitoba Education and teachers were involved in discussions of a more "continuous progress" approach to schooling, with practices that made efforts to fit the curriculum (content, learning rate) to the needs of the

child instead of forcing all children to follow a lock-step approach to graded curricula. His dialogue with the school board gained their approval for this approach and his eloquence on the topic in meetings with school staffs encouraged them to try the new ideas. In addition, he modified the extent to which IQ tests were used to rate and place students in the school system.

To assist in attracting qualified teachers to the school division, Mr. Watson recommended the development of a pamphlet about Kelsey School Division for distribution in the province's education training facilities, and to advertise for teachers in Regina and Saskatoon newspapers. He likely also played a role in the board's discussion in January 1967 to use the former TPCI building as a "Junior High" school in the Fall. At the high school level there was support for the addition of Driver Education, and a broader range of industrial arts courses, opening these courses to students in the Occupational Entrance program. It was at a May 15, 1967 school board meeting that it was agreed to implement a Grade 6 conversational French program in 1967-68.

Allan Watson was Superintendent for only one year, and in the year following, 1967-68, the MBCI principal Harold Grundy was made acting Superintendent. He was named Superintendent in 1968-69 and remained in that role until 1976. His philosophy of leadership was to allow school principals sufficient freedom to operate their schools, and he set up regular meetings of the school division's principals to discuss school and educational issues. Grundy promoted the professional development of principals and challenged them to excellence as school administrators. Under his leadership several new principals were hired, the principals' group was asked to have a representative attend every school board meeting, and the shared use of some of the Northern Manitoba Vocational Centre's industrial arts courses was developed. He also assumed the responsibility for the construction and/or additions at the various school sites.

A Change in Principals

In 1959 the principals in the elementary schools were teachers without degrees. This was starting to concern the school board, and an effort to locate better qualified applicants was to be a consideration. Retaining the high school principal Stan Toms who had a degree was a priority, and he stayed for 1959-63. Bryant Hasker assumed the principalship for one year before returning to Winnipeg. When, in April 1964, the school board considered hiring Mr. Pat Claggett, his level of salary was a topic of discussion. The lack of suitable housing for a high school principal was also a concern, and the board considered the purchase of a house for Claggett's use. When the board learned that the purchase of a "teacherage" would not be funded by the Department of Education, the board dropped the matter. Claggett was not in favour of student efforts to bring in high school football due to the high transportation costs and some liability concerns. When he decided to leave The Pas in 1966, William Moore was hired in May to replace him, but by the end of June he would not come and his contract was rescinded. Harold Grundy was hired as principal instead.

On May 15, 1966, the board minutes noted that it was their “objective to man all schools with degree personnel” and to “replace non-degreed personnel by next year.” As a result three long serving principal incumbents would resign or be replaced with principals who had more post-secondary education. Steve Gingera arrived to take over Opasquia Elementary in 1966-67, staying only for that year before accepting a position as Superintendent of Turtle Mountain School Division. He was replaced for 1967-69 by Don Simpson. Due to its size, Opasquia School also was provided with the school division’s first elementary vice-principal, Vaughn Wadelius, in 1968-69.

In 1966-67 Olga Greening was named principal for the one story Grade 1-4 Kelsey School, and Barry Cornish was assigned the principalship of the two story Grade 4-8 Kelsey School building. He left after one year and Olga Greening would assume the principalship of both Kelsey buildings for 1967-68. She was named as a Primary Supervisor the next year and although without a degree, until her retirement in 1990 she would assume responsibilities for supervising the many new Grade 1-3 teachers who would pass through the school division during this period of fast growth and change.

In July 1968 the board solidified its administrator appointments: Harold Grundy as Superintendent, James Fasano as principal at Margaret Barbour Collegiate Institute, Don Simpson as principal of Opasquia Elementary (with Vaughn Wadelius as vice-principal), Edward Husack as principal of Mary Duncan Junior High (including the “Red Brick”), and George Takashima as principal of Kelsey Elementary. In addition, Nakako Fujita was hired as a music supervisor, James Harty as a physical education supervisor, and Marie Simoens as a remedial reading teacher.

By 1969, the school division took on an even more progressive stance. Kindergartens were opened in the three elementary schools. Fasano tackled the growing changes in high school curricula at the new MBCI facility; Husack remodelled the approach to teaching junior high students at Mary Duncan, while Takashima (now at Opasquia) and Wadelius (now principal of Kelsey) accepted the challenges of the new flexible approach to curricula and instruction at the Grade 1-6 levels.

Information Sources:

Kelsey School Division Board minutes: 1959-1970

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School Board minutes: 1964

Documents: Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas Archives

“Venturing into the prairies” - The Story of the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary, 2014

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